Author's response to reviews

Title: An inevitable wave of prescription drug monitoring programs: pros, cons and tensions

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Prof David Hunter  
Editor, BMC Public Health

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Dear Prof Hunter,

Subject: Manuscript submission: An inevitable wave of prescription drug monitoring programs: pros, cons and tensions

In an effort to reduce diversion and misuse of prescription medications electronic prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMP) have been introduced in North-American countries, Australia and some parts of Europe. In this manuscript we discuss, based upon the available literature, the pros and cons of PDMP in achieving the overarching goal of reduced diversion of prescription medication, particularly opioids, without hampering access to those essential medications for those with genuine needs, and tensions around PDMP implementation.

Literature suggest PDMPs may help alleviate diversion and over-prescription, prompt drug treatment referrals, avoid awkward drug urine test; and inform spatial changes in prescribing practices for tailored interventions. Conversely, fear of legal retribution, privacy and data security, potential confusion about addiction and pseudo-addiction and pushing some patients to illicit market are the major cons. There are tensions about unintended consequence of excessive regulatory enforcements, corresponding collateral damages particularly about inadequate prescribing for patients with genuine needs, and mandatory consultation requirements of PDMP. Despite having a number of cons, PDMPs is likely to continue, and some external forces such as the information technology breakthroughs will continue to drive it forward.

To our knowledge no previous article discussed these three aspects together and analysed the topic the way we did. As literature consistently show that this problem needs a public health based solution, we believe BMC Public Health is a good match for this manuscript. We think it suits better as a commentary. However, if you think it rather suits better as a debate or simply as an article, we are happy to comply with that. We strongly believe that our manuscript will appeal to the Journal’s readership and will arouse discussion, as PDMP is a highly discussed issue at this moment.

This manuscript, or any of its part, has not been published in any peer-reviewed journals, working papers, agency and organizational reports, or in web postings; and is not under submission elsewhere. All authors report no conflicts of interest. This work received no funding from anywhere.

Thank you for considering our work for publication in the BMC Public Health.

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